

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

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## THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

(in three parts)

### I

#### A RECORD OF THE SECRET BOOK OF THE ALCHEMISTS

By Raymond Lindgren, F.R.C.

The book has a binding of copper engraved with hieroglyphics and strange symbols. Its pages are of the bark of trees and closely covered with writing. Every eighth page contains a diagram--mystic key to the text. There is an aura of reverend antiquity about it, for this is The Book of Abraham, the Jew!

In it are the secrets of existence--of life and death--of transmutation of metals--of the soul. Where is it?

The story of this ancient manuscript is an unfinished drama running through the centuries, with bearded alchemists and secretive mystics as its actors, in scenes that are now tragic, again divinely gratifying, and at all times fascinating to the seeker after truth.

But let us dip back to about the middle of the 14th century when the Book first came out of the East and into the hands of a simple bookseller in Paris, one Nicolas Flamel. The life and works of Flamel are not legendary, for documents bearing evidence of his accomplishments have been found.

Against the columns of Saint-Jacque la Boucherie was his little bookstall, barely 2 by 2½ feet in measurement. But it soon grew, causing him to move to a large house where those who copied and illuminated manuscripts could work with him. At this time, Nicolas Flamel married Pernelle, whose intelligence and devotion were so great a help to him during his long life.

Even at this time, Flamel was somewhat of a mystic. He knew that the secret of the philosopher's stone existed, and he desired to find it. But not only for the formulae that would enable him to turn base metals into gold; there were other secrets more precious that would teach him transmutation of the soul. But how could he, a poor Paris bookseller, ever contact the eastern sages whom he was convinced possessed this knowledge?

So strong was his desire, so constant, that one night he dreamed that an angel showed him the Book, admonishing him to look well upon it. Shortly thereafter, a ragged man came to his shop with a book to sell. The moment he saw it, Flamel knew that here at last was the fulfilment of his dream. He knew also that the Book comes only to those who are meant to have it.



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For twenty-one years, Nicolas Flamel meditated and pondered the secret symbols. But he was without understanding. Much of the text was in ancient Hebrew so here, too, he was thwarted in his efforts. There were at that time no Jews in France to help him, for they had been banished, many fleeing to Spain where they formed communities of learned mystics.

At the end of this score of years of concentration and disappointment--which was not long considering what was at stake--Flamel found that by adopting the clothes and habits of a pilgrim he could safely go to Spain to contact some of these learned Jews. This he did, but the exhausting journey was a failure until, weary and disappointed, he turned his face toward Paris and his beloved Pernelle.

At Leon the bookseller was by chance put in touch with a learned old Rabbi. Yes! He knew of the Book; he had been awaiting this moment all his life. Zealously and inspired, the two worked through the night. But Flamel had brought only the pages containing a copy of the Hebrew text and a few of the symbols. They must travel to Paris at once.

But Jews were not allowed in France. "Very well. I will be converted," said the old Rabbi. With great haste they began their journey to Paris, but the feeble old Jew died on the way. Flamel returned alone, aware that the knowledge he now possessed would allow the complete translation of the Book.

After three years of intensive application, the "simple bookseller," his research finished, changed half a pound of mercury into silver, then into gold. From this time on, Nicolas Flamel was rich, but all of the wealth he created was spent on charitable schemes such as the building of hospitals, churches, and houses. He worked on at his shop and continued to live in a simple manner until his transition.

Pernelle died first, and her husband spent his last few years writing books on alchemy. Then he followed Pernelle.

And what of The Book of Abraham, the Jew? As soon as the death of Flamel became known, almost every alchemist in Europe made a "pilgrimage" to his massive tomb. As time passed, his house and shop, in fact any building with which he had anything to do, were ransacked in search of the Book and perhaps a few phials of the magic projection powder without which the transmutation of metals was impossible.

But the truth is that the Manuscript, as well as a supply of the red projection powder, had been entrusted to a nephew of Flamel and remained in the family for the following two hundred years. In the reign of Louis XIII, robbers smashed into Flamel's tomb, and, soon after, word went around that the coffin was empty.

About this time, a descendant of Flamel foolishly used some of the powder in a public demonstration. Thus began a new act in our



drama, for the famous Cardinal Richelieu now took possession of the Book and tried his best to decipher and understand its veiled contents. But he died unpossessed of its secrets, and the Book again disappeared.

But there is no doubt that it was copied! One is known to have existed in Milan, Italy, in the seventeenth century. In 1719, one Paul Lucas wrote a book on his adventures in the Near East. He told of meeting a philosopher in Turkey who was familiar with the story of Flamel and had made the astounding assertion that both Flamel and his wife were still alive in India. But it is improbable that this was true, for Nicolas Flamel's philosophy welcomed natural death as a release.

About 1550, a manuscript which was probably a copy of the lost Book came to light in a curious manner in Wales. A disbarred lawyer named Talbot spent the night at an inn and the landlord showed him an unintelligible old book. It had been found, he said, several years before, together with two ivory balls, in the grave of a Catholic bishop. The landlord called his children, who were even then playing with one of these mysterious ivory balls.

Talbot bought the book and ball for five dollars and took them to a friend who was interested in hermetic science. The ivory ball contained a red powder and they made gold from it at their first attempt. But the manuscript itself remained forever meaningless to them, and when the powder was exhausted they could make no more gold.

Lust for the yellow metal and the worldly riches it brings has doomed many men down the centuries. Most of the alchemists who were able to probe for the philosopher's stone and its formulae for transmutation of metals missed, or were entirely unaware of, the sublime secrets it held for the transmutation of the spirit.

Raymond Lully made gold for Edward III. Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden issued gold coins bearing a special mark denoting their hermetic origin. Wilhelm Leibnitz, famous philosopher, joined a body of Rosicrucians in Nuremberg in pursuit of the philosopher's stone. Elector Augustus of Saxony, alchemist, left an immense fortune. Until the end of the eighteenth century, alchemists who valued their existence were forced to practice the strictest secrecy, for the persecutions and tortures inflicted on these fathers of all our modern science were horrible beyond writing.

But the secrets were not lost! Three years ago, a business man and Rosicrucian, call him Mr. X, was attending a sale at Sothebey's, the world-famous auctioneers in Bond Street, London. The personal library and effects of the Grand Master of the Masonic Order of France were being auctioned to the highest bidder.

A flat, brown book, noted in the catalogue as a copy of the breviary of Nicolas Flamel, was put up for sale. Mr. X felt suddenly that he must possess that book. Bidding began. It leaped stiffly skyward. A few early voices dropped out. Higher soared the figure.



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One opponent remained. With a steady voice, Mr. X called out his last offer. Silence. Bang went the gavel, and the book was his.

It had cost him a preposterous price, but he knew better than to argue with the hunch that had urged him to buy it. He took the book home and placed it on a shelf with some first editions and forgot about it. That was in 1934.

A few weeks ago, Mr. X was in his library and felt impelled to go to a shelf and take down this strange book. He had forgotten what it was about. Slowly, he thumbed through the pages; noticed that it was penned in the middle of the nineteenth century in ancient French; also, that it was in illuminated script, containing many drawings of alchemical apparatus in gold, silver, and various other colors. On the first page, there was a postage-stamp-size portrait of Nicolas Flamel.

Mr. X recognized, also, many secret symbols, and since he had studied early French years ago, he saw that the text was a translation of the cyphers and of secret alchemical signs used in the Middle Ages to disguise the formulae of alchemists. But he was unmoved by this discovery and, replacing the book, turned to other interests.

About a week later, a friend said casually, "Have you read, The Return of the Magi? I think you would be interested in it." Mr. X bought the book that same day and opened it at random. His eyes fell on certain words which he quickly connected with the old manuscript in his library.

Then, suddenly, he realized why he had felt impelled to purchase at so great a price that strange book. It was a copy of The Book of Abraham, the Jew!

(Rosicrucian Digest, December, 1937)

## II

### THE STONE OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

By Heinrich Khunrath

(Excerpts from the Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom)

The stone of the philosophers does exist: This experience, the best, indeed, the only reliable teacher confirms; and assuredly, nothing is more foolish than to gainsay experience. Experience sees this stone (heretofore prepared by some men) as highly efficacious. The Pope of Rome and His Majesty the Emperor so regard it, as do many temporal kings and some electors of the Roman Empire, princes, counts, barons, nobles, and doctors--close associates of noblemen and men of high character and learning; indeed, from every nation (Jewish, Gentile,



Christian, and even Turkish), and from widely differing stations and ranks everywhere, ecclesiastics as well as statesmen, learned and unlearned alike, astounded by the miracle of nature worked in art, have seen with their own eyes and touched with their own hands this stone. I know whereof I speak. I call all these men as witnesses. . . .

Reason, true and certain, the faithful guide of the Sophists, confirms it. . . .

The Sages, many and great, weighty authors--whose memorials concerning this matter are extant in many places--under most sacred oath have sworn to it unanimously and not without grounds. These men, learned and good, have always been truthful and should continue to be so regarded until something to the contrary is definitely proved against them. Since any artist must be believed in connection with his own art, should not credence be granted to these rather than to the ignorant? . . .

Nature, which is of God and in many ways faithfully serves us, day and night confirms our belief in this work. . . .

The soul, from an innate, infused-by-Himself desire, constantly attests that the philosopher's stone is in the nature of things, or else to no purpose has God bestowed that burning desire which to experience is to understand. Nothing is without purpose.

The agreement in nature of this stone with the Holy Divine Trinity, with the whole created Universe--yes, even with the Logos of God incarnate and the sacraments and mysteries of the Christian religion--compels men of sane minds to believe and confess it to be true.

Finally, the Creator, wishing to be understood by things created, had the power and the benign will, as experience testifies, from the beginning of the world to bestow bountifully the understanding of some portion of His plan upon certain men (since He gives not the whole to one alone) with the result that more abundantly and certainly the nature of God Himself has been brought to the knowledge of the human race. Thus, from a realization of God gained through the contemplation of His created world, man learns how to recognize more clearly the God Triune, author of great and good gifts, to reverence and worship Him, praise Him with grateful spirit, meditate more deeply and conjoin and reunite himself with Him. Just as it was the part of God, the most wise, to choose and find a way most convenient for asking obedience to Him, so it is ours to acknowledge, embrace and follow the way He has established.

#### Reason For Its Name

Whatever the name by which it is called among the common crowd, blind of eye and deaf of ear, the stone is appropriately named God. Himself, for certain reasons, handing it down in the writings of the wise men and sternly forbidding His priests to reveal it. Thus



philosophers have died rather than disclose it. The sign of God being sure (always has been and forever will be), this most secret mystery of science has been as a thunderbolt of the wise to the unworthy and those envious of true merit.

Nevertheless, I shall prevail upon those speaking philosophically because they say the stone is creation and re-creation also, from damp earth, sticky and glue-like, and from dry earth, too, which by its baking advances by solidifying into stone to become everlastingly set and hardened.

Alphidius says: "If the stone had its own right name, it would be stone." The others speak of it as "stone not stone." As philosophers, they speak philosophically. Lest we encroach too near and awake a divine force with which we cannot deal, let the answer come to the lofty mind capable of harboring it.

To philosophers, then, the stone is most secret, neither unwise, demented, impious, nor against sense. Moreover, it is capable of being understood. Be content, therefore, with these axiomata, which, in a brotherly manner, I leave you to consider: The principle of purpose inheres in the supreme good. When the cause of a thing remains unknown, investigation is best confined to its outward signs and manifestations.

### What It Really Is

The Philosopher's Stone is Ruach Elohim,\* the spirit of God which rested upon the waters (Genesis I). With Heaven's aid, God alone, so willing out of His own pure goodness, conceived and brought forth from the womb of a virgin a true body subject to the senses, upon the entirely vacant and empty earth and the water of the greater universe created from Chaos; the mighty son, . . . of the same substance and like unto his Father; a microcosm (not from man or some other substance, but from Himself alone); universal, triune, both male and female, visible, tangible, sensible to hearing, smell, and taste, an inhabitant of the earth, and finite; made manifest for regeneration through Himself, of physical-chemical substance.

Salute Him with wonder for His infinite benefits to microcosm and macrocosm in the universal trinity. Go thou hence, thou son of perdition, Mercury, thou and all thy works with thee, which were made by thy self for thine own adornment. Thou art a type of sinner, not savior; thou canst and shouldst be saved, not save. Thou art a leader into error, destruction, and death; not that well-known good leader to truth, increase, and life. He has reigned, is reigning, and will reign in all natural phenomena, naturally and universally. Son of nature, universal, SALT OF SATURN, transfusible by his own power, ever and always in nature, permanent and universal in origin and virtue. Listen and attend: SALT IS THE MOST ANCIENT STONE. A MYSTERY! Keep silent as to its inner essence, like a tenfold Harpocrates.



He who can understand, let him understand; I have spoken. Salt, not without reason, has been adorned by the wise with the name of WISDOM, THAN WHICH, AND THAN THE SUN, they have said, there is nothing more useful in the world. Study upon this.

\*Ruach Elohim is Holy Spirit, the deep breath, the vapor of the holy vigor of omnipotent and omniscient God; it is a certain life-giving and virtue-conferring emanation of His vital creative power, a flowing forth of the first and highest motion from the deepest recess of His Divinity. It is evident that it is the will, the maker, the first cause, the primordial and original Archetype of everything in the world --or rather, of the images, appearances, and modes of creation conceived and pre-existing in the mind of the Grand Architect.

(Rosicrucian Digest, October, 1949)

### III

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY GRAIL

By Ralph M. Lewis, F.R.C.

The story of the Holy Grail is one of those romances or legends which has grown out of religious supposition and captured the imaginations of the idealists and has likewise become a truism to the superstitious. The term Grail applies to a cup or chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper. It was also said to be the vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea collected the blood which flowed from the wounds of Jesus. In this, we see the immediate possibility for a magical belief. According to the psychological law of the association of ideas, the primitive mind would believe that any property or article touched by Jesus, or contiguous to his person, would thereby become imbued with the qualities of his being. Since Christ represents the Divine and was able to effect miraculous cures, it became the simple belief, of which contagious magic consists through the association of ideas, that the Grail from which Jesus drank could likewise effect cures. This would, naturally, make the Grail, if it existed, a tremendous prize; not for its intrinsic or historic value alone, but because of the healing efficacy it could exert.

In the space of fifty years, namely, from 1170-1220, the great body of the Grail legends was developed. However, it was not until as late as 1861 that complete texts of the transcriptions of the legends and romances of the Grail as they existed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries began to appear. The majority of the early manuscripts referring to the Holy Grail are fragmentary and disputable but sufficient to arouse interest. The principal legends concern the Grail as an object of search by the Knights of the Round Table.

In fact, it is one of the many Arthurian romances. The legend was given further publicity by the famous poem by Tennyson and the romance by Sir Thomas Mallory. A general theme relates that the famous



chalice, made of olive wood and edged in rare metal, was preserved by Joseph of Arimathea after being used to catch the blood of Christ. Eventually, Joseph journeyed to Glastonbury, Britain, and placed it in safe hands. From there it eventually passed to Wales. While in Britain, it is related to have effected miraculous cures. In fact, there are records of those who visited the Welsh home in which the purported Holy Grail was preserved, who touched it or drank from it and, consequently, were said to be cured. One such letter, dated February 5, 1859, reads:

"Cup lent this day to William Lloyd for the use of his wife. Left a watch. Cup returned March 7, 1859. Cured." This is but another example of the superstitious belief in contagious magic. A touch of the cup and there was transmitted to the toucher the power believed to be resident in it. The amusing thing about the incident above is that a cup, if actually once used by the Christ, would be a priceless religious and archaeological treasure; yet it was loaned to an individual for no more security than his watch.

Theurgical or magical properties were so attributed to this cup and its surroundings that eventually persons imagined themselves cured by merely being on the premises where stood the house in which, it was related, the cup had been preserved.

The greatest value of the legends about the Holy Grail is that the Grail became a Christian symbol of virtues to be sought by man. It represents transcendental ideals and rare knowledge, enlightenment, if you will, which man should seek to attain. In fact, the Grail as such a symbol has been embodied in many mystical or esoteric initiations to teach the candidate a lesson by example. The candidate is depicted as a knight in search of an actual cup or Grail. He is made to perambulate from station to station in the temple of initiation and at each place to experience allegorically and symbolically many trials and temptations intended to discourage him in his search. It is necessary for him to ask a certain question, but he is made to ask the wrong question for a number of times so that, symbolically, his search for the Grail seems to be blighted. Ultimately, he is made to learn the right question. When he asks it, the Grail, symbol of truth and knowledge, is then delivered to him. Consequently, the Grail has become to mystics an emblem of moral purity, triumphant faith, and gracious charity for which men always search. To the mystics, "'twas not of wood, nor any manner of metal, nor was it anywise of stone, nor of horn, nor of bone." Simply, it was a spiritual object to be spiritually discerned.

The philosopher's stone for which the ancient and medieval alchemists sought is comparable to the Holy Grail. To the materialistic mind and to the superstitious, the philosopher's stone was the hidden, primary, material essence of nature, the key by which men could transform all matter at will if they discovered it. To the mystics and philosophers, or the transcendental alchemists, the philosopher's stone was the quintessence of man's own nature, the self, the real being, which resides within him and which he must come to know.